

Shannon Copper Company Store (Brutinel Apartments)
Clifton Townsite
Coronado Boulevard
Clifton
Greenlee County
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-197

HABS
ARIZ
6-CLIFT,
25-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SHANNON COPPER COMPANY STORE
(Brutinel Apartments)

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Location:

Clifton Townsite, Coronado Boulevard, Clifton, Greenlee County, Arizona

Significance:

Associated with the Shannon Copper Company, Commerce in Clifton, and the development of Clifton as a community.

Description:

This brick commercial building is two stories high with a flat roof and parapets. Except for two minor additions, the plan is rectangular. The west front, which faces Coronado Boulevard, has store fronts at the ground floor and windows at the second floor. Brick pilasters, extending from the ground to above the parapet top, divide the front into distinct sections. The ground floor consists of two separate storefronts. The north commercial bay has a symmetrical wood-framed storefront with large windows flanking a recessed entry. The south bay features an arched entry supported on sandstone piers. Fixed sash windows with segmentally-arched heads and projected sills appear to each side of the entry. A modern sign marquee has been added between floors across the entire west front. The second story is divided into two distinct sections as well, corresponding with the layout of the ground floor. The north section is composed of four wooden double-hung windows, evenly spaced. Two partial-height piers appear at the parapet. The south section is composed of three bays divided by piers; the center bay contains a single double-hung window and the flanking bays contain paired double-hung windows. All windows have segmentally-arched heads and projected sills. The west front is stuccoed; it is not known whether the finish is original.

The sides and back are of simple, unadorned, stuccoed brick punctuated by windows. Two small two-story additions of wood framing and stucco have been constructed at the back of the building.

History:

The Shannon Copper Company Store was completed in 1905 for the Shannon Copper Company. It served as general store so that Shannon Copper Company employees and others could purchase goods on account and have the debt deducted from their paychecks. The Shannon Copper Company constructed a new store in 1913 and the building was acquired by C.P. Dunn and Felix Brutinel. These two men rented out space in the building, the ground floor as retail space and the upper floor as apartments. In later years the building was known as the Brutinel Apartments.

The Shannon Copper Company was incorporated on November 13, 1899. It consisted of a group of mines that were located as early as 1875 by Charles and Baylor Shannon in the area where the town of Metcalf would develop. The mines had a twenty-five year history of sporadic production until they were purchased just prior to the turn of the century by Montana mining engineer William

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Boyce Thompson. Thompson quickly invested money in the Shannon operation, spurred by high copper prices at the time, and completed the Shannon Incline early in 1902 to deliver ore to the Coronado Railroad. The Shannon smelter, seven miles south of Clifton on Shannon Hill, began operations on May 5, 1902.¹

In July of 1903, the Shannon Copper Company purchased the stock of the Becker-Franz Store in South Clifton (see HABS No. AZ-171) in order to give its employees a location where they could purchase goods on credit and have the charge deducted from their paychecks. This was a common practice in company towns, and although the company store often gouged workers on price it did carry a tab for the employees when they needed it. In April of 1905, the Shannon Copper Company decided to open its own store in South Clifton. Contractor Harry Westlake constructed the building. The building was finished by the fall of 1905 and offered a wide selection of goods for Shannon Copper Company employees.²

The Shannon Copper Company prospered. It weathered the decline in copper prices in the slump of 1907 and by 1909 company officials decided to build their own railroad from Metcalf to the smelter. This would end the Shannon Company's reliance on the Coronado Railroad. Construction of the Shannon-Arizona Railway began in 1909. The boom caused by the railroad construction increased the population of Metcalf and the smelter town at Shannon Hill. After the railroad was completed, goods could be delivered to the Metcalf and Shannon Hill on the railroad with ease. The Shannon Copper Company saw little need for a store in Clifton so decided in 1912 to construct a store on Shannon Hill where its smelter was located. The new store was completed by January of 1913 and all of the goods from the old store in South Clifton were transferred to Shannon Hill.³

After it removed its goods to the new store on Shannon Hill, the Shannon Copper Company leased its old store to Clifton businessmen C.P. Dunn and Felix Brutinel. Dunn and Brutinel in turn leased the lower floor of the building to various merchants as retail space and converted the second floor to apartments which they easily rented in housing-short Clifton. Retailers who leased space from Dunn and Brutinel between 1913 and 1930 included M.H. Kane, A.J. Burgham for the Midway Meat Market, D.L. Bouse's Greenlee Cash Store, the Roscoe-Stanton Co. store, and Edward Bennett's Clifton Laundry. In the 1930s as the importance of the retail portion of the building declined, the building became known as the "Brutinel Apartments" because its primary function was rental housing.⁴

In 1918, Dunn and Brutinel even leased space back to the Shannon Copper Company. In December the company announced a close out sale of all goods at its Shannon Hill and Metcalf stores. All goods would be transferred to the old Shannon Copper Company Store in Clifton for disposal. The reason for the sale was clear. Because of the post-war slump in copper prices, the Shannon Copper Company was in financial trouble. It could not sell the copper stockpiled for shipment. In the Metcalf mines men were seeking other work and on Shannon Hill the smelter was being operated one shift only. In January, the expected announcement came. The Shannon Copper Company would cease operations. In February of 1919 Morenci merchant Paul Becker picked up the remaining inventory of the Shannon Copper Company store. In June of 1919, Arizona Copper Company General Manager Norman Carmichael announced that the A.C. Company had purchased all the remaining holdings of the Shannon Copper Company, including the mines and smelter.⁵

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Sources (endnotes):

1. David F. Myrick, Railroads of Arizona, Volume 3: Rails and Copper Mines: Clifton, Morenci, Metcalf (Glendale, CA: Trans-Anglo Books, 1984), pp. 180 and 195-196; Waldemar Lindgren, "The Copper Deposits of the Clifton Morenci District, Arizona," U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper no. 43 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), pp. 46-47.
2. Copper Era July 30, 1903 (I, 3: 1); April 20, 1905 (I, 3: 2).
3. Myrick, Railroads of Arizona, p. 201; Copper Era January 10, 1913 (I, 5: 3).
4. Copper Era July 18, 1913 (I, 7: 3); January 26, 1917 (I, 1: 2); February 16, 1917 (I, 1: 4); August 8, 1924 (I, 1: 1); October 20, 1928 (I, 1: 4); January 4, 1930 (I, 7: 4).
5. Copper Era December 13, 1918 (I, 1: 4); January 3, 1919 (I, 1: 4); January 10, 1919 (I, 5: 4); February 7, 1919 (I, 5: 3); June 13, 1919 (I, 1: 1).

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